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THE WUNNUSKU SEPEE PEOPLE:

AN HISTORICAL SURVEY

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Report**



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AN HISTORICAL SURVEY

by

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for the
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INTRODUCTION

The title of this study is actually misleading. Because Europeans generally kept records of everything they did, the history of Indian people is often thought to begin with the arrival of the first Europeans to North America some four hundred years ago. This is nonsense, of course. The human history of the Webequie area--which we are dealing with here--is at least 10,000 years old. If we were to think of that history in terms of a calendar month, the 300 years or so of "recorded" events would represent only one day.

So this report is really the story of the Webequie people as seen through the eyes of the Europeans--those fur traders, missionaries and Government officials--who have encountered them. These Europeans were not detached "scientific" observers of Native society--their comments have to be understood in the context of their particular activities, whether to trade with Indian people, or to Christianize them, or to bring Indian people the "benefits" of European civilization. As long as we keep such bias firmly in mind, the records themselves contain a great deal of useful material. So, after a brief look at the first 9700 years of the Wunnusku Sepee people, I will present the last 300 or so years, "as seen through European eyes".

ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology is the name given to the study of garbage. By digging up and analysing the tools, bones and other remains left by humans, the archaeologist tries to reconstruct their "prehistory"--those thousands, even millions of years, before the development and preservation of written records. In what is now northern Ontario, such activities have been going on for about the last twenty years.

As far as I am aware, there has been no archaeological work done in the Webquie-Winisk River area, although archaeologists have been active to the east, west and south.¹ Their general conclusions are as follows.

About ten thousand years ago, practically all of what is now northern Ontario--including the Winisk River and Lake area--was covered with ice. As this ice receded, groups of Indian people began to move in. These people probably lived by hunting large game animals such as caribou and the now-extinct mammoth and mastodon (a type of early elephant). By about five thousand years ago, it appears, Indian people in the north had a way of life remarkably similar to that of a hundred years ago. Campsites were on major rivers, lakes and islands; and the people subsisted on caribou or moose, fish, and smaller animals such as beaver and rabbit.

Three thousand or so years ago, northern peoples began to develop pottery for storage of food and other purposes. Otherwise, their way of life appears to have remained the same. Tools such as scrapers, knives, snowshoe needles and arrowheads were made of bone; awls, fishhooks and chisels sometimes of copper. It is clear that, at least by this time, northern peoples were trading with Indian people further to the south.

The most extensive archaeological evidence from what is now northern Ontario covers the last thousand years. Again, it appears that Indian people of this period were directly descended from those who had lived in the north before, and their way of life changed little, if at all. Archaeologists have found two different pottery styles from this period, but it is unclear whether these styles actually represent different people. Along the coast of James and Hudson's Bay, as well as some ways inland in what are now northern Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario, a pottery tradition known as Selkirk dominates. Many archaeologists have associated this with the people now known as Cree. In the rest of northern Ontario, as well as parts of southern Manitoba, a tradition known as Blackduck dominates, and archaeologists are arguing about

whether this is the product of the historic "Ojibwa" or of the Assiniboine people who now live in the western prairies. Preliminary surveys have shown Blackduck sites on Attawapiskat Lake, as well as along the Albany River, so it is very likely that any archaeological work at Webequie would show similar pottery remains.²

OJIBWA, CREES AND OTHERS

The argument among archaeologists about the meaning of pottery remains has spilled over into the "historic" period. Basically, the question is--are the various groups now living in the north descended from those "prehistoric" people, and from those people named in the early European records of the 1600's and 1700's? This particularly applies to those now known as Ojibwa, who live as far north as Webequie and Big Trout Lake. Some people say that this is impossible to determine, given the confusing statements in the historical documents³. Others say that the Wunnusku Sepee people and their neighbours to the west and south are, according to their own traditions, the descendants of people "who have always been there".⁴ But the most popular theory is that the people now called Northern Ojibwa are descended from Indian people of Lakes Huron and Superior who migrated northward to follow the fur traders, and escape the marauding Iroquois, reaching the Winisk Lake-Big Trout Lake region in the middle-1700's.⁵

Which is correct? My own analysis of the historical documents suggests that the so-called Northern Ojibwa have always inhabited what is now northern Ontario--at least as far as the headwaters of Winisk Lake. Theories of a general northward migration in the period 1670-1750 are clearly wrong. I say this because such theories are based on two major errors: the first is assuming that groups known in the records as "Kilistinon" or "Kiristinon" are the ancestors only of those people who today speak the "Cree" language; the second error is assuming that those who spoke the "Ojibwa" language were only known as Ojibwa.

The word "Cree" comes from a term spelled variously Kilistinon, Kiristinon, Kinistinon, Criq, Cris etc, and has never been adequately defined. The Relation (Report) of the French Jesuit missionaries for the year 1640 places the "Kilistinon" on James Bay; the Relation for 1657-58 adds the Kilistinon of "Ataouabouscatouek" (Attawapiskat) Bay--which seems to have been a general term for the west coast of James Bay--and the Kilistinon "Alimibegouek" (Nipigon).⁶ It is references such as these which have led some people to conclude that northern Ontario was

occupied first by "Creeps", most of whom moved out, to be replaced by Ojibwa.

But the early French observers used the term "Kilistinon" in only the most general sense, as in the following definition from the Jesuit Relation for 1660-61:

...Upon this (Hudson's and James) Bay are found, at certain seasons of the year, many surrounding nations embraced under the general name of Kilistins.⁷

As French knowledge of the northern interior became more extensive in the later 1600's, they began to name other residents of the country north and west of Lake Superior. The north side of Lake Superior was possessed by the "Outchibous" and the "Marameg" (Ojibwa, and Great Fish people) who, together with the "Noquet" (Bear) people from the south side of Lake Superior, joined together with the inhabitants of Sault Ste Marie to form one Nation, known as the "Pahouatingouach Irini" or in French, "Saulteurs".⁸ There were also the "Aumonssouiks" or "Monsoni", inhabitants of the north as early as 1671⁹, and the "Gens des Terres", a literal French translation of the Indian "nopiming dajé inini" or inlanders.¹⁰

These same groups were still living north and west of Lake Superior in the 1700's, as is clear from an undated enumeration by the French fur trader and explorer La Vérendrye, who spent the years 1726 to 1743 in what the French called the Pays d'en Haut (upper country). The area of Pays Plat and Caministigouya (Thunder Bay) was inhabited by groups, said La Vérendrye, speaking "Good Sautaux" (Ojibwa); west of them were the Monsoni, divided in three or four bands, who also spoke Sautaux. In the Shield country north of Michipicoten and Pic Rivers, as well as an undefined area east of Lake Winnipeg, lived the "Gens des Terres", who spoke "bad Sautaux with a lot of accents". And also living east of Lake Winnipeg were the "Cristinaux du Nord" (Northern Cristinaux) who spoke "a corrupted Cristinaux derived from the Gens des Terres".¹¹

By "gens des terres", La Vérendrye seems to have meant those Indian people living between Michipicoten and, say, Red Lake, Ontario, who--Native speakers will acknowledge--speak a different Ojibwa dialect from those of Lake Superior and Rainy Lake--Lake of the Woods. By the Northern Cristinaux, I suggest, he meant the people speaking what is now known as "Severn Ojibwa"--that is, the inhabitants of Island Lake, Manitoba, as well as Sandy Lake, Big Trout Lake, Round Lake--and possibly Winisk Lake--Ontario.¹²

Support for this interpretation comes from a number of sources. First of all, the Indian people who live at the places I've just mentioned--with the exception of Winisk Lake--still call themselves, and their language, "Cree". And secondly, we can look to evidence from the Hudson's Bay Company's traders, who competed with the French for Native furs in the same areas north of Lake Superior. James Isham, who came to York Factory on Hudson's Bay in 1732, wrote in 1743 of the "Nakawawuck Indians, who border's by the Little sea so calld" (Lake Winnipeg)--an area occupied, according to La Vérendrye, by the Northern Cristinaux and Gens des Terres. Isham's successor at York Factory, Andrew Graham, who spent the years 1749 to 1775 on Hudson's Bay, later defined these "Nakawawuck", as well as the other Native groups who traded at the Company's bayside posts:¹⁴

<u>Nations</u>	<u>Tribes</u>	<u>To what Fort they Resort</u>
Keiskachewan	...	
	Washeo-Sepee	Severn Settlement
	Muskegowuck	York Fort and Severn
	Kastechewan	Albany Fort
Nakewewuck	Winnipeg	Albany, Severn, York Fort
	Namakou sepe	Severn
	Waupus	Severn and Albany
	Christianaux	Moose River, Albany and Severn
	Winescaw-sepee	Albany and Severn
	Ougibowy	Albany
	Mistehay Sakahegan	Albany, Severn and York
	Mithquagameou sepe	Albany
	Shu mattaway	York Fort, Albany and Severn

By Keiskachewan, Graham meant those speaking the language known today as Cree. The Nakewewuck, he calls the "most northern tribes of the Chipeways"--that is, Ojibwa-speakers.¹⁵ Among the subsidiary tribes of the Nakewewuck are the "Ougibowy" (Ojibwa) proper, who inhabited the north shore of Lake Superior, according to both La Vérendrye and the Hudson's Bay Company.¹⁶ The rest of the subsidiary tribes seem to be a mix of those La Vérendrye called "Cristinaux" and those he called gens des terres. Graham's "Christianaux" clearly spoke Ojibwa; among them were the inhabitants of Lake Nipigon and vicinity¹⁷--which suggests strongly that the Nipigon "Cree" of the 1657 Jesuit Relation actually spoke Ojibwa. La Vérendrye's "Northern Cristinaux", however, appear to be represented by Graham's "Namakou sepe" (Trout River), Mistehay Sakahegan (great lake--i.e. Lake Winnipeg)¹⁸, and Shumattaway¹⁹ tribes. In 1815, the Hudson's Bay Company recorded the following description of the east

side of Lake Winnipeg:

The Indians who inhabit this part of the country, belong to the extensive class of Southward or Knisteneaux Indians & consist of four principal tribes, which may be again subdivided into particular families. A band of Indians called the Pelican Tribe appear to be the most numerous & widely scattered. They occupy in conjunction with two other bands known by the name of the Moose and Sucker Tribes all the Country north of Blood River, but how far to the eastward is not exactly known. The southern parts of the district about the waters of the Blood River are inhabited by several families who are together called the Kingfisher Tribe...²⁰

The modern descendants of the above people are the Berens River and Pekangikum "Saulteaux"²¹ and the Island Lake-Sandy Lake-Big Trout Lake-Round Lake "Cree" or "Ojibwa".²²

To repeat the point, then, the references cited above highlight the two most common errors in following named groups in the area between Lake Superior and Hudson's Bay--not all "Crees" spoke Cree; and not all Ojibwa-speakers were known as "Ojibwa".

THE WUNNUSKU SEPEE PEOPLE

The most important of Andrew Graham's Nakawawuck "tribes", from our point of view, are the Wunnusku Sepee, or Winisk River people. The "Wunnusku" are also listed by James Isham in 1743, as one of the eighteen Nations "that uses the English settlements in these northern parts"²³. The earliest specific reference to these people I have been able to find is from the Account Books of York Factory (Pinise'wichewan) for 1715, when a "Capt of ye Wenisk Indians" was given a present of tobacco to encourage his people to come down to trade.²⁴

Now it is possible that the last two citations refer to the ancestors of those Cree-speaking people who now live at the mouth of the Winisk River on Hudson's Bay. But Andrew Graham included what are now the Winisk "Cree" in the "Muskegowuck" (Swampies) and "Winnipeg" (Coast) tribes of the Keiskachewan or Cree-speaking Nation; so it is more likely that "Wunnusku" refers to the Ojibwa-speaking inhabitants of the Winisk River and neighbourhood.

Depending on whether the particular observer was writing from Lake Superior or from Hudson's Bay, the Wunnusku Sepee people would have been known to the French as either "gens des terres" (Nopiming daje inini) or "Cristinaux". The French who captured the Hudson's Bay Company's trading post at the mouth of the Nelson River in 1694, and held it until 1714, called the immediate inhabitants of the Coast

"Ouenebigonhelinis" or "people by the sea-shore"²⁵--those Cree-speakers Andrew Graham called "Winnipeg". The "Cristinaux" extended as far as Lake Superior.²⁶ As late as 1858, the Hudson's Bay Company referred to the various people trading at Martin's Falls on the Albany River--including the Winisk River people--as "Creeps".²⁷

According to Andrew Graham, the Winisk River people traded with the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Severn, at the mouth of the Severn River (Washeo Sepee), and at Fort Albany (Kastichewan Sepee). The principal route from Winisk Lake to Fort Severn is via the Mishimattawa and Shakemeh Rivers to Hudson's Bay, and then along the coast the the mouth of the Severn.²⁸ The main route to Fort Albany follows the Attawapiscat River to James Bay, then southward along the shore.²⁹

Although the records of the Fort Severn trading post, which begin in 1759, are full of references to the "Winescaw River Indians"³⁰, the records of Albany Fort--which begin in 1692--are not. This does not mean that the Wunnusku Sepee people did not trade there--only that the Company's traders knew them by some other name. In general terms, the Company divided the Indian people who traded at Albany into three groups: "home" Indians, those Cree-speakers who lived within a radius of about 100 miles of the Fort, and who hunted geese there in the fall³¹; "Western" or "upland" Indians, those who came down the Albany River to trade; and "Northern" Indians, which seems to have been a general term for all the people who came down the coast to trade.³²

Occasionally, the traders were more specific about these "northern" groups, and two in particular are of interest here. In July of 1693, the Hudson's Bay Company presented a gun and shot to "the Capt: of a distinct tribe called Met lawarith-thas"³³ In May of 1707, these "Metaworener" Indians were said to live to the Northward of the Albany River.³⁴ In May of 1724, a number of "the Rabbit and Mettawariner" Indians came to Albany Fort to trade.³⁵ Now, the "Waupus" (Rabbit) Tribe were another part of Andrew Graham's Nakawawuck, or Ojibwa-speaking Nation; they traded, like the Winisk River people, at both Albany and Severn. According to the present inhabitants of Webequie, "Waupus" was the name for at least some of the people between Fort Hope, on the Albany River, and Kasabonika³⁶--so it is possible that the "strange" Metlawarith people included neighbours like the Wunnusku Sepee people.

These Metlawarith are never mentioned again after 1724. In May of 1729, however, a number of "Jack Indians" came "Down" the Albany River, which suggests they lived up country from Albany.³⁷ Two years

later, though, these same "Jack" people came to Albany from the Northward.³⁸ Their leader, a man named "Putcheke-chick", was later identified as "a Leading Northern Indian"³⁹ and, finally, as the "Captn of the Severn Indians"⁴⁰. So the Jack people lived between Albany and Severn, and came to the Fort both by the Albany River, and by the Coast of James Bay. On a French map of Canada, dated October of 1725, what appears to be the Attawapiskat River is identified as the "Rivière du Brochet"⁴¹ that is, jackfish or pike river. Given that this river was a major route of the Wunnuskū Sepee people, I suggest that they were included in the number of Indians known by the nickname of jack or jackfish.

I think the same conclusion can be reached from following the individuals named in the fur trade records. This is only possible, unfortunately, with the Fort Albany material, because the records of Fort Severn before 1800 mention few, if any, individuals by name. I begin with a man named "Pautauwistiquan", who in June of 1757 was described as a leading northward Indian.⁴² The same "Pattawestiquan" was accompanied to the Fort in August of 1767, by a trading "Lieutenant" named "Earchekeshick"⁴³. They were almost certainly related, although the exact nature of such a relationship would be impossible to determine. From the year 1770 on, this "Earchekeshick" frequently came to Albany with another leader named "Earchenaw" alias "Assup"⁴⁴, and I conclude therefore that they too were related. George Sutherland of the Hudson's Bay Company reported in 1777 that:

...this (Atawapuskat) River descends from two large lakes up country where the french had a settlement not above ten years ago this is Captain Assups Ground likewise Archekeshick...⁴⁵

One of these "large lakes up country" would be Attawapiskat Lake; the other, I suggest, was Winisk Lake. I say this because the latter two men came to Fort Albany in 1783 with a man named "Amoe"⁴⁶; from that time on, "Amoe" and "Assup" traded together frequently both at Albany and at the Hudson's Bay Company's inland settlement, known as Gloucester House, at Washi Lake on the Albany River--then, after 1794, at Martin's Falls.⁴⁷ In August of 1786, the Fort Albany trader reported the arrival of "Lieut Amoe and other Wenusca river Indians"⁴⁸--a reference which connects the above individuals with Andrew Graham's Winescaw sepee tribe, as well as, I believe, the various northern/jack people mentioned in the earlier Fort Albany records.

From this point on, the Winisk River people are much easier to identify. The Hudson's Bay Company reported in 1815 that the country to the northward of Attawapiscat Lake was occupied by a "band" consisting of "Armoe" and his two sons, and five brothers named Peenaceewayquan, Nono, Weijack, Humpy Back and Awasheesh; plus a man named "Weekamow" and his four sons.⁴⁹ The Master of Severn House reported in the same year that the "Country about Waynuskee Lake and River" was frequented by six men named Ethinue Auquas, Cha che mass, Snowbird, Kesha the nue, Kee ke shick and Kuskowan, together with 7 women and 16 or 17 children.⁵⁰ Amo we can recognize, but the last reference I have been able to find to Assup is from the Fort Albany Post Journal for June 17th, 1806, when his "Gang" came down to Albany in 10 Canoes.⁵¹ It seems likely, then, that Assup's descendants were among those listed above.

In January of 1815, the "Canadian" opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company established a post "on a large lake at the head of Weeniskew River"; among the people who traded there were Armoe and Weekeemaw and their sons.⁵² It is possible that this post was located on Winisk Lake, although the Hudson's Bay Company placed its "Badger (Winisk) River house" in 1820 on Wapikopa Lake.⁵³ When George Barnston of the Hudson's Bay Company spent the winter of 1833/34 in the "Weenisk" country, his house was also located on Wapikopa Lake, a short distance from the previous location.⁵⁴

There can be no question that the present residents of Webequie are the descendants of the Wunnusku Sepee people cited above--although detailed proof would require a great deal more genealogical work. Weekimaw, for example, had at least 8 sons⁵⁵; the name of his fourth son was "Sawkennaquib"--the grandfather of Adam Suganaqueb.⁵⁶ "Sawkonnkweb" brought his winter's hunt in April of 1834 to George Barnston on Wapikopa Lake.⁵⁷

LIFE IN THE NORTH

So far, I've spent a lot of time trying to define the Winisk River people themselves. But what do the records tell us about life in the north? And what effect did the fur trade have on Indian people in that area?

Probably the most important items that Indian people received from the fur traders in exchange for their furs were metal tools. Guns replaced the spears and bows used earlier in hunting; knives and chisels replaced the stone and bone versions of the same items. Metal traps,

however, were not introduced in the areas along and north of the Albany River until the 1800's.⁵⁸ Indian people came to depend on the fur traders for guns and ammunition, chisels and hatchets--without them, they found it difficult to hunt and trap. The trader at Henley House, about 150 miles up the Albany River, wrote in April of 1767:

Came in an Indian family...starved for the want of powder and shot and other necessities such as hatchets kittles and Cloth to Cloathe themselves neither of which I have got to supply them with Excepting the two first articles...⁵⁹

But the fur traders also depended on the Indian people to use these new tools to supply them with food for the winter. George Sutherland of the Hudson's Bay Company almost starved to death at Sturgeon Lake, west of Lake Nipigon, in the winter of 1779/80, because no one would provide him with food, and he did not know where to look himself.⁶⁰ And the new inland post of Gloucester House, on Washi Lake was abandoned temporarily in November of 1777, because of lack of country provisions.⁶¹

Life was not easy in the northern climate, either for traders or for those who brought them the furs. At first reading, the Hudson's Bay Company records seem full of unrelieved misery, with a constant parade of "starving" people to the Company's forts. This impression is misleading, however. Not everyone starved at the same time, or for long periods of time. A man named "Win,ne,nay,way,cop,po" or "Jecob"⁶², who traded at Fort Albany from at least 1769⁶³ and was, with his family, the "chief support" of Gloucester House with country provisions until his death in 1800⁶⁴, reported himself starving four times in that thirty year period.⁶⁵

The reasons given for such hard times varied. In May of 1735, the Fort Albany Post Journal records that:

...2 Northern Indians Came here today to trade acquainting me of a Great Dearth & Scarcity amonge ye Indians in Generall Wee knowing of about 30 Indians of our home Western & Northern Natives being dead this year & yt: furrs is very scarce wth: them by reason of ye Great Quantity of Snow they had this Winter they Could not hunt...⁶⁶

In a specific reference to the Winisk River people, The Master at Gloucester House reported in 1792:

...part of Captn Assups and Amoes gangs came in, but very poorly gooded, they confirm the report of wolves being so numerous that they cannot get any Deer for them to maintain their family on and they also Inform me that all the Indians they had seen was starving in a greater or lesser degree which I am sorry to hear.⁶⁷

European diseases also caused their problems. The smallpox epidemic which began among the Sioux of the Upper Missouri River area in 1780, and spread into the prairies and lakes further north,⁶⁸ reached the Winisk Lake area four years later:

...Captain Assup came in so poor that many of his young fellows could not even pay their debts, they tell of numerous deaths among the indians around them by an epidemical disorder which from their description should seem to be the small pox, which I fear has made its way from the northward.⁶⁹

Until the Hudson's Bay Company began settling inland from the Bay in the later 1700's, it is difficult to find much information about how the so-called "upland " and "northern" Indians actually lived. It is clear that many people from the Lake Nipigon area and west were constantly at war with the "Poet" (Sioux) Indians, and that this prevented them from devoting as much time to trapping as the Company would have liked.⁷⁰ There is no evidence, however, that those living north of the Albany went to war.

The records of Fort Severn, as well as inland posts like Henley, Gloucester and Martin's Falls, show that, in the later 1700's, the "northern" Indian people depended heavily on deer--either caribou or moose--for food and hides. The Master at Severn House, William Falconer, received deers meat in July of 1777 from the "Wenisca River Indians", who had been hunting at the "great fall" (Limestone Rapids) up Severn River⁷¹--the usual crossing place for a great caribou herd.⁷² In April of 1781, the Master at Gloucester House received from five of "Captain Assup gang...5 sleds well loaded with...254 lb of green venison 39 of dry 4 lb and 6 tongues of them".⁷³ When, in February of 1790, "Captain" Jacob was unable to find any deer, he was forced to make snow shoes from beaver skins.⁷⁴

From the fur trader's point of view, the ideal situation was to have some, but not too much, big game around. If deer were plentiful, the Indian people spent too much time hunting, and not enough trapping⁷⁵; if deer were scarce, the Indian people could not trap, for want of food.⁷⁶

In the first half of the nineteenth century, big game, as well as beaver, largely disappeared from most of northern Ontario.⁷⁷ The Winisk River area was one of the last affected--the Hudson's Bay Company reported in 1815 that "Waynuskee River and Lakes" produced a great number of geese, fish and venison, as well as beaver, otter and martin, even though beaver had already been almost annihilated over towards Severn River.⁷⁸ Yet by 1834, venison was "not even to be heard of" in the vicinity of Winisk Lake, and fur-bearing animals, with the

exception of otter and mink, had largely disappeared.⁷⁹

This brought about what has been called the "fish and hare" period for northern Indian people.⁸⁰ Without food and hides from big game, and without many of the trade goods that came from the fur trade, Indian people were forced to survive on fish and rabbits. Instead of trading his furs in 1827, for example, Amoe's son Numawkeykeeshick was obliged to use them for cloathing⁸¹; this was a common event in the north.⁸²

In a funny way, Indian people were returning to a way of life that predated the coming of the white man. In 1716, the Hudson's Bay Company was trying to persuade the people who traded at Fort Albany not to wear their beaver skins⁸³--the Company wanted them to wear European clothing instead, and trade their furs. The lack of fur-bearing animals, and the relative abundance of fish a century later, was also bringing a return to habits the traders did not particularly care for--as the following comments on the Winisk River country make clear:

...On Lands thus wasted, the Native finds no encouragement to follow the chace. Having procured a Blanket, an axe and a Hook, he becomes forthwith miserably independent. Day after day finds him seated at a hole in the Ice, angling for Pike, to the full gratification of all that is indolent in his disposition, but in perfect mockery of the Trader's wishes, such employment preventing him from following the pursuits which would be much more advantageous for the concern...⁸⁴

Dependence on rabbits, of course, meant that Indian people experienced great hardship every seven to ten years, when rabbits would practically disappear.⁸⁵ In the area north of the Albany, however, the effects were not as severe, because people depended "more on fishing than on snaring" for their livelihood.⁸⁶

MODERN TIMES

The "opening" of what is now northern Ontario can be traced to one single event--the completion, in the early 1880's, of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Although the railway has been celebrated in song and story, it proved to be a mixed blessing for Indian people.

The C.P.R. did return competition to the fur trade. Since 1821--when it merged with its chief rival, the Northwest Company--the Hudson's Bay Company had had a virtual monopoly on the fur trade north of the Albany River. Although some of the Winisk River people were able to foster intra-post competition, as well as Company disapproval, by trading both at Martin's Falls and at Fort Severn or Big Trout Lake⁸⁷, the nearest "opposition" posts were far to the southwest near the American

border.⁸⁸ Soon after the railway opened, however, Webequie people such as "Mikinack" began travelling to Red Rock, at the south end of Lake Nipigon with their furs.⁸⁹ Opposition traders also used the railway to gain access to more remote parts of the north: in 1890, the Hudson's Bay Company established Fort Hope on Eabemet Lake to meet such a challenge, and during the winter of 1890-91, added a "shanty" on Attawapiskat Lake.⁹⁰ By the turn of the century, the main opposition on Eabemet Lake was coming from "McKirdy and Company" of Red Rock. In June of 1903, the Hudson's Bay Company Manager at Fort Hope complained that:

The Opposition (McKurdy) has managed to get a footing here...from what I can judge they will use F(ort) Hope⁹¹ as a Depot and send out supplies to Attawapiskat and Weenusk.

Unfortunately, the same railway which brought new fur traders to the North also carried other newcomers. Some were looking for timber and minerals; some had come as tourists to hunt and fish; and some had even come to trap fur-bearing animals. Many Indian people who lived in the direction of the C.P.R.--those with friends and relatives who had taken part in the Robinson Treaties (1850), Treaty Three (1873) and Treaty Five (1875)--knew that the White man's Government always made arrangements with the Indian people before allowing white men to settle among them. As early as 1886, Indian people had asked for formal meetings with the Government to discuss the problems created by the Railway.⁹²

Further to the north, however, at least some of the impetus for a new "Treaty" was coming from employees of the Hudson's Bay Company. In January of 1897, Jabez Williams, the Company's clerk at Lac Seul, wrote to the Department of Mines in Ottawa. Unless the Government provided subsidies, he said, prospectors could not afford to search for minerals in "Keewatin" (as the District north of Lac Seul and the Albany River was then known):

There is another question of perhaps far greater importance... viz: the Indian title, which has not yet been extinguished in Keewatin. Would it not be a wise move on the part of the Government to close this matter with our Northern Indians now? I am suggesting these matters to you knowing that a settlement of matters of this kind can often be made easier and to better advantage before civilization has set its foot on the country that (sic) afterwards...⁹³

The same Jabez Williams, by this time in charge of the Osnaburgh Post, wrote a petition in December of 1901 on behalf of the "Indians residing on and near Lake St. Joseph"; in the petition, specific mention is made of mining exploration being carried on near Lake St. Joseph.⁹⁴

Because of this petition, as well as similar presentations from Indian people living north of Chapleau and Sudbury, the Department of Indian Affairs began to consider the idea of a Treaty. The area under consideration included about 90,000 square miles between the height of land and the Albany River--which at that time was the northern boundary of the Province of Ontario.⁹⁵ Winisk Lake was then considered to be part of Keewatin District, Northwest Territories.

To find out how many Indian people lived in the "unceded portions of Ontario"⁹⁶, the Department of Indian Affairs contacted the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1902, Alex Matheson, the Company's Chief Factor at Nipigon, gave the following estimates of people from "Ontario" trading at the Albany River Posts:⁹⁷

Fort Hope	100
Osnaburgh	100
Marten's Falls	60
Fort Albany	100

It would appear that the Hudson's Bay Company had more ambitious plans for the Treaty than did the federal Government--whether the Indian people were willing or not. In June of 1902, Jabez Williams wrote the following letter from Osnaburgh to his boss, Alex Matheson, at Nipigon:

Your notes re the proposed Treaty are as I have for some time thought best. Whatever is done in the matter by the Dept. (of Indian Affairs) the sooner the better. The Osnaburgh Indians are anxious for it. There may be some little difficulty with the Fort Hope Indians now, but it may not be insurmountable. They were alright last year unless they have changed their minds. The Indians as far as the Attawapiskat River northward from the Albany were inclined to accept it. The R(oman) C(atholic) Attawapiskat Indians are led by Kachang who is not anxious for government control for reasons you know of...

...the territory included in a rough boundary as follows viz commencing at the mouth of the Attawapiskat River northward from the Albany, from the mouth of the said river westerly through the headwaters of the Winisk River, thence passing close to the Greater Trout Lake near to its southern shore, as far as the Crane Indians hunt--wherever they go--thence southerly to the eastern shores of the Trout Lake situated in a N.W. direction from Lac Seul... (and) as strip of country which borders the Lake St. Joseph in the direction of Sturgeon Lake...and all the country not covered by Treaty (3) the Robinson Treaty in Ontario and continuing to the Albany River on its southern Bank...⁹⁸

The Treaty was originally scheduled for the summer of 1904, and in May, the Hudson's Bay Company was hired to outfit and guide the Treaty Commissioners. The Commissioners were to travel down the Albany River, stopping at the Company Posts listed above.⁹⁹ But the Federal Government

made it very clear to C.C. Chipman of the Hudson's Bay Company that no Indian people living north of the Albany River would be included in the Treaty.¹⁰⁰ This was still the case when, after a year's postponement, the Government Commissioners were given official instructions, by Order-in-Council dated July 3rd, 1905, to obtain the surrender of a tract of land "...bounded on the east and north by the boundaries of the said Province of Ontario as defined by law".¹⁰¹

Three days later, however, a very interesting thing happened. An Order-in-Council dated July 6th, 1905, empowered the Commissioners to set aside reserves in:

...that part of the North West Territories lying between the Albany River, the District of Keewatin and Hudson Bay, and to admit to Treaty any Indians whose hunting grounds cover portions of that District.¹⁰²

Why was this done? The official Report of the James Bay Treaty or Treaty Number Nine offered an explanation:

...When the question first came to be discussed, it was seen that it would be difficult to separate the Indians who came from their hunting grounds on both sides of the Albany River to trade at the posts of the Hudson's Bay Company, and to treat only with that portion which came from the southern or Ontario side. As the cession of the Indian title in that portion of the Northwest Territories which lies to the north of the Albany River would have to be consummated at no very distant date, it was thought advisable to make the negotiations with Indians whose hunting grounds were in Ontario serve as the occasion for dealing on the same terms with all the Indians trading at Albany River posts, and to add to the community of interest which for trade purposes exists among these Indians a like responsibility for Treaty obligations.¹⁰³ (emphasis added)

This is a curious statement. For one thing, Indian people along the Albany River and to its north were trading with "opposition" people, as well as with the Hudson's Bay Company. And the post of Fort Hope had only been in existence since 1890, so any "community of interest" among the Indian people was recent. To me, the Commissioners' statement, combined with the attempts, noted above, by Company officers to influence the scope of the Treaty, leads to the inescapable conclusion that the Hudson's Bay Company had persuaded the Government to add to the numbers taken into Treaty, and to create a series of "Hudson's Bay Company Trading Post Bands" along the Albany River.

It may be that the Company considered it had the best interests of the Indian people at heart. But for the Webequie people at least, the events of 1905 were to have major implications. The Government Commissioners reached Fort Hope on July 18th, 1905:

This important post of the Hudson's Bay Company is situated on

the shore of Lake Eabemet, and is the meeting point of a large number of Indians, certainly 700, who have their hunting grounds on both sides of the Albany and as far as the headwaters of the Winisk River.¹⁰⁴

On the 19th of July, the Indian people "were requested to select representatives to whom the business of the commission might be explained". After discussions, the Treaty was signed by these representatives, and the Commissioners paid out the Treaty monies.¹⁰⁵

In February of 1906, the Department of Indian Affairs sent the Ontario Government a list of those who had been paid by the Commissioners in 1905. At Fort Hope, said the Department, 390 Indian people received money--but a further 244 were absent:

...you will observe that the largest number of absentees are Indians who hunt in the Northwest Territories. They only come to Fort Hope with their fur catch, and leave immediately for the interior.¹⁰⁶

A detailed analysis of the 1905 Treaty payroll for Fort Hope shows that the majority of these "absentees" were from the Winisk Lake and River area. The names of Webequie people such as "Cathlin", "Chewaybick", "Mikenack", "Spence", "Saganaqueb", and "Wapaas" are entered, but no family numbers or sums are placed opposite their names.¹⁰⁷ If these people were not there, how did their names get entered on the Treaty paylists? Their names could have come from only one source--the Account Books of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Hope.

So the Webequie people became, without their consent, members of the Fort Hope Indian Band--an artificial creation, it would seem, of the Federal Government and the Hudson's Bay Company. The Reserve selected by the new Fort Hope "Band" in 1905 was in the immediate vicinity of the Hudson's Bay Company Post, on Eabemet Lake.¹⁰⁸

Since the Webequie people were not present at the Treaty negotiation we will never know whether they would have consented to the Treaty, or to the site chosen for the Reserve at Fort Hope. We do know, however, that for some time now, the people of Webequie--and of Lansdowne House and Nibinamik (Summer Beaver), two other components of the artificial Fort Hope Band--have been trying to obtain separate Band and Reserve status for their communities.¹⁰⁹

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ John W. Pollock, "Algonquian Culture Development and Archaeological Sequences in Northeastern Ontario", Canadian Archaeological Association Bulletin #7 (1975), pp.1-53; K.C.A. Dawson, Algonkians of Lake Nipigon: An Archaeological Survey, National Museum of Man, Mercury Series (Archaeological Survey of Canada, Paper No.48)(1976); in addition, the Province of Ontario has been conducting archaeological surveys in the area north of the Albany River as part of its West Patricia Land Use Study.
- ² J.V. Wright, Ontario Prehistory: An Eleven-thousand -year Archaeological Outline (Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1972); J.V. Wright, unpublished archaeological survey of Attawapiskat Lake, National Museum of Man, Ottawa.
- ³ J.V. Wright, "A Regional Examination of Ojibwa Culture History", Anthropologica n.s. Vol.VII (1965), pp.189-90.
- ⁴ E.S. Rogers, "Changing Settlement Patterns of the Cree-Ojibwa of Northern Ontario", Southwestern Journal of Anthropology 19 (1963), pp.65-66.
- ⁵ Charles Bishop, The Northern Ojibwa and the Fur Trade (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), pp.7-10; 305-332.
- ⁶ R.G. Thwaites (ed.), The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers, 1896-1901), Vol.XVIII, p.229; Vol. XLIV, p.249.
- ⁷ Thwaites, op.cit., Vol.XLVI, pp.248-49.
- ⁸ Thwaites, Vol.LIV, pp.
- ⁹ Pierre Margry, Découvertes et établissements des Français dans l'Ouest et dans le Sud de l'Amerique septentrionale 1614-1754: Mémoires et documents originaux, I (Paris: 1879), pp.96-99; VI (Paris: 1888), pp.30-31.
- ¹⁰ Thwaites, Jesuit Relations, LV, p.99; J.A. Cuoq, Lexique de la Langue Algonquine (Montreal, 1886), pp.128-29.
- ¹¹ Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de la Vérendrye, "Détail des noms et de la distance de chaque Nation, tant du Nord du Lac Superieur, que des Terres découvertes et Etablies dans L'Ouest", Public Archives of Canada (P.A.C.) M.G.18 B12, pp.36-41.
- ¹² H.C. Wolfart, "Boundary Maintenance in Algonquian: A Linguistic Study of Island Lake, Manitoba", American Anthropologist 75 (1973): 1318.
- ¹³ E.E. Rich (ed.) James Isham's Observations (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1949): 191
- ¹⁴ Rich, op.cit., p. 310; Glynwr Williams (ed), Andrew Graham's Observations on Hudson's Bay (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1969), pp.206-07.
- ¹⁵ Williams, op.cit., p.204.
- ¹⁶ On May 17th, 1734, 5 Canoes of "Oachiapoia" came down to Fort Albany, led by an Indian named "Mittoon" (Hudson's Bay Company Archives B3/a/22; B3/d/42fo.13). That same Indian leader "Mitun" was described in 1747-48 as a "French" Indian from "ye Great Lake called Kitchigami" (B3/d/56 fos. 9-10). Kitchigami is the Ojibwa name for Lake Superior (William W. Warren, History of the Ojibway Nation, Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1974, p.38).

- ¹⁷In a letter dated January 1st, 1776, Humphrey Marten, the Hudson's Bay Company's Chief at York Factory, wrote to Thomas Hutchins, his counterpart at Albany, recommending a man named Sooneecappo, "a Christinau, or as some may pronounce it a Callisteen Indian" as a guide to the country about Lake St. Ann's (Nipigon) (H.B.C.Arch. B239/b/36 fo.10).
- ¹⁸H.B.C.Arch. B198/a/10
- ¹⁹The Shamattawa River is part of the main route used by Indian people travelling from the Island Lake-Red Sucker Lake area of northern Manitoba to Hudson's Bay.
- ²⁰H.B.C.Arch. B16/e/1 fos.6-7
- ²¹A.Irving Hallowell, "The Passing of the Midewewin in the Lake Winnipeg Region", American Anthropologist, N.S. Vol.38#1 (1936), p.51; R.W.Dunning, Social and Economic Change among the Northern Ojibwa (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p.81 n.12.
- ²²Charles Bishop, E.S.and Mary Rogers, personal communication.
- ²³Rich, pp.112-13
- ²⁴H.B.C.Arch. B239/d/7 fo,9
- ²⁵J.B.Tyrrell (ed.), Documents Relating to the Early History of Hudson's Bay (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1931), pp.262-63.
- ²⁶Ibid.
- ²⁷H.B.C.Arch. B123/z/1 p.22
- ²⁸Canada. Department of Mines. Geological Survey of Canada, Summary Report (1903): Wm.McInnes
- ²⁹H.B.C.Arch. B234/a/1 fo.5
- ³⁰P.A.C. M.G.19 D2 Vol.1 Pt.1; Entry June 30, 1769; H.B.C.Arch. B198/a/15 fo.24
- ³¹Such were Andrew Graham's "Kastichewan" (Albany River) tribe. A man named Sowosk or the "Indian Doctor" was "Captain of this(Albany) River" from about 1711 until his death in 1741 (H.B.C.Arch. B3/d/19 fo.19; B3/d/21 fo.12; B3/d/48 fos.10-11). His son "Wauchusk" (B3/a/33) became "Captain of our hunting Indians" (B3/d/61 fo.10), as did--following his own death in 1785--Wauchusk's son "Tabethimo" (B3/a/84 fo.35).
- ³²B3/a/23; entry May 9th, 1735
- ³³B3/d/1 fo.16
- ³⁴B3/a/2
- ³⁵B3/a/12
- ³⁶Fred Jacob, personal communication
- ³⁷B3/a/17

38 B3/a/19

39 B3/d/43 fo.10

40 B3/d/55 fo.11

41 P.A.C. National Map Collection, Map H3/900-1725

42 B3/a/49

43 B3/a/59

44 B3/a/62 fo.29; B3/a/63ⁿ fo.34; B3/a/75 fo.1; B3/a/84 fo.46; B3/a/65 fo.5

45 B3/a/72 fo.4

46 B3/a/81 fo.38

47 B78/a/13 fo.9; B78/a/18 fo.28; B123/a/5 fo.38

48 B3/a/86 fo.39

49 B78/e/3 fo.3

50 B198/e/1 fo.8

51 B3/a/108

52 B10/a/2 fos.12-13

53 B123/e/5 fo.3

54 B234/a/1 fo.11

55 B123/e/10 fo.7

56 B198/d/120a fos.4-5; Fred Jacob, personal communication

57 B234/a/1 fo.18

58 Bishop, Northern Ojibwa, pp.216-17

59 B86/a/13 fo.21

60 B211/a/1

61 B78/a/3 fo.8

62 B3/d/80 fo.13

63 B3/a/62 fo.4

64 B3/a/78 fo.30; B123/a/6 fo.46

65 B3/a/65 fo.37; B78/a/12 fo.13; B78/a/19 fo.19; B78/a/21 fo.4

66 B3/a/23

67 B78/a/21 fo.17

68 A.J.Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), pp.104-06.

69 B3/a/82 fo.47

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71 B198/a/21 fo.34

72 B198/a/17 fo.43

73 B78/a/6 fo.16

74 B78/a/19 fo.16

75 Bishop, pp.264-65

76 B3/a/90 fos.25;37

77 Bishop, pp.277-84

78 B198/e/1 fos.4-5

79 B234/e/1 fo.3

80 E.S.Rogers and Mary B.Black, "Subsistence Strategy in the Fish and Hare Period, Northern Ontario: The Weagamow Ojibwa, 1880-1920", Journal of Anthropological Research, Vol.32#1 (Spring 1976), pp.1-43.

81 B123/e/10 fo.7

82 Bishop, pp.277-84

83 K.G.Davies (ed.) Letters From Hudson Bay, 1703-40 (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1965), p.41

84 B234/e/1 fo.3

85 Rogers and Black, p.10

86 B123/c/1; Letter, Fe.8, 1849

87 B123/e/10 fo.7

88 Bishop, pp.117-22; 134-35

89 B291/a/5

90 B123/e/15

91 B336/e/6; B291/b/1; Letter of June 26, 1903

92 Ontario. Legislative Assembly. Sessional Papers (1890) No.87. Report on Basin of Moose River, p.85

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- ⁹³P.A.C. R.G.10 Vol.3722 File 24161; Letter Feb.3, 1897
- ⁹⁴P.A.C. Treaty File; Letter and petition, Dec.12th, 1901
- ⁹⁵Treaty File; Memo, 17th Aug.1903
- ⁹⁶Ibid.,
- ⁹⁷Treaty File; Letter of Dec.6th, 1902
- ⁹⁸H.B.C.Arch. B155/b/2; Letter, June 2, 1902
- ⁹⁹Treaty File, Letter May 4, 1904
- ¹⁰⁰Treaty File; Letters May 11, 18, 1904
- ¹⁰¹Report of a Committee of the Privy Council on Matters of State, approved by His Excellency the Governor General, 3 July 1905. P.C.1236D, P.A.C. R.G.2.
- ¹⁰²Report of a Committee of the Privy Council on Matters of State, approved by His Excellency the Governor General, 6 July 1905. P.C. 1238D, P.A.C. R.G.2.
- ¹⁰³The James Bay Treaty: Treaty Number Nine. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1964, p.3
- ¹⁰⁴Treaty No.9, p.6
- ¹⁰⁵Treaty No.9, p.6
- ¹⁰⁶Ontario. Legislative Assembly. Sessional Papers (1908) No.77, p.72.
- ¹⁰⁷Department of Indian And Northern Affairs, Hull, Québec. Paylist of Fort Hope Band, 1905. Fred Jacob, Webquie, Ontario, personal communication
- ¹⁰⁸Treaty No.9, p.11
- ¹⁰⁹Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. File 489/30-3-64 Vol.1, Letter of Oct.15, 1945; File 489/30-1-1, Letter Oct.18, 1974.



